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Chapter Two

After the 25 January Revolution: Democracy or Authoritarianism in Egypt?

Nicola Pratt

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to understand the challenges to the emergence of democratic governance in the aftermath of Egypt's 25 January Revolution. Much political science scholarship as well as many Western politicians conceptualized the 25 January Revolution as the beginning of a transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Yet, what emerged in the period until 30 June 2013 is a 'grey zone' (Carothers 2002) between democracy and authoritarianism, where the institutions of democracy existed in name (elections, constitutions, parliaments) but in reality functioned as vehicles for securing obedience to the ruling regimes of SCAF, followed by that of former President Mohammed Morsi. During this period, human rights abuses continued, security forces acted with impunity, civilians were tried before military courts and the constitution of December 2012 undermined rather than extended many rights (Human Rights Watch 2012). Millions of Egyptians participated in the June 30 uprising with the hope of resurrecting the original aims of the 25 January Revolution, for freedom, social justice and dignity (Ezzat 2013).

This chapter argues that the challenges facing Egyptians in achieving their aims are intrinsically linked to dismantling authoritarianism, which is related to the specific historical experiences of Egypt's state- and nation-building processes. I build on my previous work on democracy and authoritarianism in the Arab world (Pratt 2007) in order to understand the dynamics of post-Mubarak Egypt. Within this framework, overcoming authoritarianism does not merely depend on crafting democratic institutions. I argue that there is a need to reassess the legacies of colonialism and imperialism for Egyptian identity construction and, linked to this, conceptions of citizenship, in order to open spaces for pluralism and inclusion.

I begin by briefly critiquing mainstream political science approaches to political transitions for their failure to consider the different configurations of social relations that underpin authoritarianism and democracy. I then highlight the significance of the historical legacies of colonialism and anti-colonialism in the politics of constructing citizenship in Egypt and its relationship to normalizing authoritarianism. Subsequently, I examine the ongoing and incomplete 25 January Revolution in order to illustrate how historical legacies inform current struggles within Egypt over the nature of Egyptian citizenship and the future of the polity. The most significant contest revolves not around institutions or political party programmes, but around conceptions of Egyptian identity and linked to this, discussions over gender roles and relations, the position of minorities and Egypt's relations with the West.

POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

Mainstream political science scholarship explains transitions away from authoritarianism as a result of splits within ruling elites that enable democratic forces to mobilize at the level of

civil society (O'Donnell et al. 1986). Once a transition has begun, democratic consolidation depends on the establishment of certain prerequisites: institutions that facilitate democratic procedures (such as free and fair elections, and the rule of law); a political culture that embodies democratic values; and/or elites that follow the democratic rules of the game, amongst others (Schedler 1998). This literature tends to be elite-focused. Where non-elites play a role, it is as 'civil society', holding governments to account and embodying liberal values (Diamond 1994).

Since Hosni Mubarak stepped down, commentators have sought to understand the persistence of authoritarianism and the limited democratization of Egyptian politics. Indeed ever since his ouster, timelines for handovers, elections and referenda have gone ahead despite popular protests against human rights abuses and continuing injustices. The actions of the Muslim Brotherhood after February 2011 aimed at consolidating their power rather than consolidating democracy. They attempted to colonize state institutions and marginalize dissenting voices as well as unleashing repression on protesters in the name of 'saving the revolution' and respecting the democratic will of the people (Sayed 2013; Stacher 2012).

Can we explain or understand the apparent endurance of authoritarianism in Egypt by identifying the absence of prerequisites for democratic consolidation? Should we point to the lack of rule of law? Or the lack of respect amongst elites for the rules of the democratic game? Building on these themes, scholars and commentators have largely identified two obstacles to a democratic transition in Egypt: the 'deep state'; and the behaviour of Egypt's political elites.

The 'deep state' refers to the strength of the security forces and their allies within the state that are hostile to democracy and to democratic accountability. Their interests lie with authoritarian rule. The 'deep state', so the argument goes, remains the greatest obstacle to democratic consolidation, by preventing implementation of the rule of law (Amrani 2012; Brownlee 2011). For more than two years after the fall of Mubarak, no steps were taken to reform the security services in order to prevent the wide-scale abuses that happened under Mubarak. Moreover, there was almost no accountability for the actions of the security services during the eighteen day uprising or afterwards (Amnesty International 2012; Human Rights Watch 2013a). This provoked many protests, including massive demonstrations in Port Said from January through to March 2013 (Amnesty International 2013). Following the 30 June uprising, security forces failed to prevent the killing and wounding of several tens of protesters (either for or against the deposed president Morsi)(Human Rights Watch 2013c), and may even have been responsible for many of the killings (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and other human rights organizations 2013; Human Rights Watch 2013b), thereby contributing to political tensions and deadlock within Egypt. Indeed, despite its democratic impulses, the 30 June uprising may have facilitated a reconstitution of the 'deep state' (Jadaliyya Egypt authors 2013).

A second trend among commentators and scholars has focused on the anti-democratic *behaviour* of the new ruling elites, first the SCAF, then former President Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, which were widely considered to be the real decision makers during Morsi's presidency. The SCAF's disregard for democratic process ranged from a failure to empower the civilian government to the violent repression of dissent. During his period in power, Morsi failed to reach out to other political forces, despite his narrow majority in the presidential elections of June 2012. In addition, he issued a presidential decree

in November 2012 that concentrated powers in the hands of the president, replaced editors-in-chief of state-owned newspapers with Muslim Brotherhood supporters, and used violence against those demonstrating against the new constitution (Abou-El-Fadl 2013; Al-Arian 2012; Carothers and Brown 2012; Trager 2013). As a result, many Egyptians who voted for the Muslim Brotherhood and for Mohammed Morsi became disillusioned with both, giving impetus to the 30 June uprising, initiated by the *Tamarod* (or ‘rebel’) campaign (Abdel-Baky 2013). Simultaneously, the former political opposition were also criticized in some quarters for its lack of unity and weakness (see (Carothers 2013) for a rebuttal of some of these criticisms).

Whilst all of the above provide valid observations on the development of post-Mubarak politics, they do not help us to understand how these events came to be, despite a massive mobilization against the authoritarian rule of Mubarak, and continuing popular protests and resistance against authoritarian practices in post-Mubarak Egypt (Abou-El-Fadl 2013; Al-Jazeera 2013b; Editors 2013; Hall 2012). The focus on the ‘deep state’ and elites—whether SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood or the political opposition parties—does not fully represent the political dynamics of post-Mubarak Egypt, which include the role of ordinary people mobilizing, not only protesting on the streets, but also launching and promoting new initiatives within communities, workplaces, universities and other civic spaces created as part of the ongoing revolutionary process. Perhaps one of the most important lessons of the 2011 uprisings, not only in the Arab world but globally, is the desire of ordinary people to redefine democracy away from mere adherence to political procedures and elite-led institutions (elections, parliaments and the judiciary), and towards a human-centred or deep democracy that supports the dignity of the people. This dignity encompasses human rights and freedoms, including social justice. Indeed, the two slogans of the 25 January demonstrations were

‘bread, freedom, human dignity’ and ‘bread, freedom, social justice’. In other words, politics cannot be reduced to the actions of political elites within formal political institutions but must recognize the agency of non-elite actors in shaping political outcomes. Consequently, a broader conceptualization of politics is necessary in order to understand political transitions.

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND CONSOLIDATION: RECONCEPTUALIZING THE POLITICAL

In order to reconceptualise the political, I draw on the writings of the Marxist author and activist Antonio Gramsci. It is analytically useful to refer to Antonio Gramsci’s differentiation between political and civil society and the relationship between them (Gramsci 1971). Political society includes the formal institutions to which theories of democratic transition refer: parliaments, executives, judiciaries, as well as the apparatus of state coercion (the military and the police). These institutions enable the political elite to rule through direct domination, including coercion. However, in order to govern effectively, and based on consensus, political elites need to win the hearts and minds of the citizenry. Otherwise, they are obliged to resort to rule through coercion, which is a costly and ineffective long-term strategy—as Hosni Mubarak discovered. For Gramsci, civil society constitutes the sphere in which the battle for the hearts and minds of citizens is conducted (Femia 2001: 140). It includes those institutions, organizations and groups that are not directly governed by the relations of production (that is, firms) nor directly responsible for the exercise of political power, such as political parties, the government, the parliament and the judiciary (Gramsci 1971: 56 n. 5). This is a sphere not merely of organizational actors, but of spaces in which

ideological struggle takes place—such as, the media, debating salons, places of worship and public squares, in addition to the family or private sphere.

In other words, the power of elites depends upon their acceptance amongst the citizenry. This relational concept of power is termed ‘hegemony’ by Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony exists as a consensus concerning the ‘naturalness’ of existing relations of power, backed by the coercion of the state apparatus (the police, courts, etc.). The 25 January Revolution demonstrated that Egyptians rejected the domination and coercion of Mubarak’s regime and that the latter had lost its hegemony over a large part of society. Ongoing popular protests and increasing popular violence after Mubarak stepped down illustrated that neither the SCAF nor the Muslim Brotherhood captured a sufficient number of ‘hearts and minds’ to enable them to rule through consensus and, instead, they were obliged to rely upon coercion. Indeed, one of the fundamental errors of the Muslim Brotherhood was to assume that their plurality in the first parliamentary elections and their victory in the first presidential elections indicated their hegemony over the vast majority of the population.

Nevertheless, popular acts of protest and violence should not be mistaken for resistance to authoritarian rule, whoever is in power. We must differentiate between the act of opposing particular political elites, on the one hand, and the act of dismantling authoritarianism, on the other. In this respect, Antonio Gramsci differentiated between a ‘war of manoeuvre’ and a ‘war of position’. A ‘war of manoeuvre’ represents an attack on the ‘outer edifices’ of the system of rule (for example, the regime, its policies and its institutions), whereas a ‘war of position’ is an attack on the ideological complex that underpins that rule (Boggs 1976: 53). Between 25 January and 11 February 2011, the Egyptian people waged a ‘war of manoeuvre’ against the regime of Hosni Mubarak, calling explicitly for his downfall. After Mubarak

stepped down, Egyptian people waged a war of manoeuvre against the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood/President Mohammed Morsi.

A ‘war of position’, on the other hand, requires challenging a whole range of established ideas and practices—what Terry Eagleton (Eagleton 1991: 114) refers to as ‘culture’ in the widest sense—which help to normalize and naturalize the ruling regime and its system of power. Gramsci regarded civil society as the trenches from which social forces would wage their ‘war of position’ against capitalism (Gramsci 1971: 229–38). I argue that we can also view civil society as the sphere in which a ‘war of position’ against authoritarianism is waged (Pratt 2007: 13-14). Many Egyptians have been waging a war of position against authoritarianism for decades (Pratt 2007). This struggle greatly intensified after 2000, which marked the beginning of a new trend of popular mobilization (Abdelrahman 2012; El-Mahdi and Marfleet 2009). In 2000, a nationwide Palestine solidarity movement began by hundreds of students protesting against Israeli policies during the Second Intifada and popular protests, including an occupation of Tahrir Square, against the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Abou-El-Fadl 2012; Schemm 2003), thereby challenging the regime’s hegemony over the public sphere. From 2004, new movements for political reform, such as Kefaya, emerged, as well as online dissent through blogging. From 2006 onwards, workers protested against pay and conditions (Beinin 2009). The fall of Mubarak, rather than constituting an endpoint in of those struggles, represented a new phase in this war of position against authoritarianism.

However, there are different wars of position being waged in the post-Mubarak era, with implications for the unfolding of politics. There is a war against authoritarianism, which Egypt’s revolutionaries view as continuing despite Mubarak stepping down (Abou-El-Fadl 2013). The idea of this war of position is encapsulated in the phrase, *al-thawra mustamirra*—

‘the revolution continues’—and includes protests against, and resistance to, a range of social injustices. This war of position seeks to keep alive the ‘spirit of the eighteen days’, characterized (or even romanticized) as a space of pluralism and voluntarism, where Muslims and Christians, young and old, men and women, and people of different classes came together and governed themselves effectively and fairly.

Other wars of position have been waged in the post-Mubarak era. These can be categorized under the single umbrella of the ‘counter-revolution’. However, their constituencies and discourses differ. The Muslim Brotherhood can be considered part of the counter-revolution as it sought to normalize its monopoly of power and marginalize any dissent through recourse to religious-patriotic discourse. This war of position was represented in the narrative that the revolution *was* the eighteen-day uprising that led to the removal of Mubarak and its endpoint was the handover to Egypt’s first democratically-elected president, Mohammed Morsi, in June 2012. It also emphasized the necessity of the ‘return to normalcy’ and the ending of public protests, which threatened the ‘nation’ and its economy as well as undermining the aims of the revolution.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s war of position overlapped to a large degree with that of the SCAF, the latter which seeks to normalize its power through a patriotic-national security discourse, claiming to act in the interests of the ‘Egyptian nation’ whilst seeking to protect its own socio-economic and political privilege. For example, in response to massive protests against President Morsi on 30 June 2013, the army gave politicians 48 hours to resolve the political crisis, and justified its intervention based on its self-declared ‘patriotic and historic responsibilities to protect security and stability’ (Al-Jazeera 2013a). Despite the overlapping objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood and the army, the latter was ready to intervene to

remove the Brotherhood from power when it became clear that it was unable to stabilize Egypt. Finally, whilst the remnants of the Mubarak regime are considered an important element of the counter-revolution, they do not wage their own war of position but appear to operate under the guise of other counter-revolutionary forces, whether the Muslim Brotherhood or the armed forces and the ‘deep state’ (Haddad 2013).

These struggles over the meaning and objectives of the January 25 Revolution represent struggles over ‘the hearts and minds’ of the Egyptian people and the definition of the future polity. The aim is to create a new ‘historical bloc’ (Gramsci 1971: 365-366)—that is, an alliance of forces and ideas that are able to govern Egypt not only by coercion but through consensus (that is what Gramsci termed ‘hegemony’) (Gramsci 1971: 12, 161). The competing discourses of different political and social actors construct different visions of citizenship in the ‘new Egypt’, which depend upon particular representations of Egypt and Egyptian-ness. These two elements, ‘Egypt’ and ‘Egyptian-ness’, are mutually constitutive and are intrinsic to delineating the polity and who belongs to it. In this respect, the defining of citizenship is dependent upon answering the question, ‘who is an Egyptian?’

THE POLITICAL AND THE POST-COLONIAL PREDICAMENT

Why should Egyptians quarrel with each other about their identity? ...

Whenever there is an acute crisis regarding Egypt’s political direction and its socio-political set-up, it turns into a search for something broader and deeper—a ‘soul’ and a ‘fabric’ (Abdulla 1999: 172–3).

The question of ‘who is an Egyptian?’ has a particular complexity in light of the legacy of colonialism and the struggle against it. The construction of an idea of ‘national difference’

constituted an important means of resisting European colonial power amongst colonized countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It depended upon the construction of a binary opposition between ‘us’ (the colonized) and ‘them’ (the colonizer). As Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee 1993) argues, the construction of national difference depends upon the formulation of an identity and culture that is deemed exclusive and different from those of other nations. The logic of national difference entails recourse to ‘essences’ that deny difference *within* nations (Chatterjee 1993): 6), and seeks to ‘cleanse’ the national culture/identity from ‘alien’ influences. This logic operates to suppress pluralism, reject cosmopolitanism and erase (not in the sense of eliminate but rather in the sense of glossing over) inequalities and injustices within the nation, whether based on class, gender, ethnicity or religion—all in the name of protecting national unity against the ‘Other’. The strands of nationalist thinking that emerged and strengthened in Egypt between the First and Second World Wars, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Young Egypt party, generally illustrate these features (Gershoni and Jankowski 1997).

In the post-independence period, continued interventions by the Great Powers compounded the inequalities of the global political economy and undermined the sovereignty of formerly colonized countries to different degrees. In this context, the discourse of national difference was reproduced in order to challenge continuing Western intervention and to mobilize efforts for Egypt’s national modernization. In Egypt, the discourse of ‘national difference’ was produced through Gamal Abdel Nasser’s pan-Arab ideology as it sought to mobilize resistance to the West, not only within Egypt but also across the Arab world, as well as to rally the ‘productive’ sectors of society at home. Whilst Nasser’s rule helped to bring about significant socio-economic progress to Egypt, nevertheless, the discourse of pan-Arabism helped to normalize the coercive and authoritarian powers of the post-independence Egyptian

regime. It suppressed dissent, only recognizing those political, economic and social demands that supported regime-directed modernization (Abdel-Malek 1962; Beinin 1989; Pratt 2007: 40-45). Nevertheless, despite this suppression of dissent, Nasser enjoyed widespread support (El-Din 1995: 238).

Thus in order to produce a fixed, monolithic identity, elites have constructed cultural borders, which are policed, both literally and discursively, to maintain unity in the face of the neo/colonial 'Other'. After the 1967 defeat, and with the coming to power of President Anwar al-Sadat, pan-Arabism gave way to Egyptian nationalism. Paradoxically, despite his re-orientation of foreign policy towards the West, foreign influences over national culture and identity have continued to be represented as 'dangerous' to the nation. Yet it is also clear that, as a result, state elites can construct those ideas and practices that it believes are threatening to it – such as human rights and women's rights – as 'foreign' and, therefore, threatening to the nation. Indeed, some human rights and women's rights violations have even been justified on the grounds of protecting the nation against cultural imperialism (Pratt 2005). The counterpart of the 'dangerous foreigner' is the domestic 'fifth column' that threatens the 'fabric' of the nation, or its progress, through its particularistic rights claims. Such accusations have been leveled at Coptic Christians as well as workers at different moments in Egypt's post-independence history and are also implicit in criticisms from some quarters of protests by these groups in the post-Mubarak period.

I argue that a 'war of position' against authoritarianism depends upon the reconstruction of an Egyptian identity that addresses in new ways the question of relations with the West and accommodates differences within the nation based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion. In this way, democratization represents a project not only of advocating political

reforms but also a new worldview that breaks down the dichotomies of us/them and authentic/foreign that have helped to suppress pluralism and sustain authoritarianism. The establishment of democratic rules and institutions without attempts to articulate a new vision of Egyptian identity and belonging can simply lead to a transition away from authoritarian rule towards what Tom Carothers has called a ‘grey zone’: neither authoritarianism nor democracy (Carothers 2002).

Here, I focus on the following themes within public debates in the post-Mubarak period: 1) the role of religion in the public sphere (or the relationship between Egyptian-ness and Muslim-ness); 2) linked to this, the position of the Coptic Christian community; 3) the relationship between Egypt and the West; and 4) the position of women.¹ I examine what these debates tell us about the construction of a new citizenship in Egypt and the potential for democracy in post-Mubarak Egypt.

The Role of Religion in The Public Sphere

Although many commentators refer to previous Egyptian regimes as secular, religion has long played a role in Egyptian public life, not least because personal status issues have always been determined by shari‘a. The religious source of personal status laws, which govern the most intimate of spaces within the nation state, are an essential part of ‘national difference’, in that they have enabled previous regimes, from that of Gamal Abdel-Nasser to that of Hosni Mubarak, to present themselves as protectors of the ‘authentic’ Egyptian family and its values as the bedrock of national culture (Hijab 1988). Whilst there has been a persistent presence of Islam in the public sphere in the post-independence era, regimes have subordinated Islam to the state by making religious clerics state employees, calling on Al-

Azhar to legitimize government policies through supportive *fatwas* and by criminalizing independent religious associations such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood was created in 1928 in resistance to British colonial rule and what Hassan al-Banna, the founder, viewed as an invasion of Western cultural values (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999: 41). Despite cooperating with the Free Officers to overthrow the monarchy in 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood was side-lined from power by the new regime then, following an attempt on Gamal Abdel-Nasser's life, banned in 1954 (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999: 43). Its members were arrested and tortured and its leaders executed. Under Sadat, there was a rapprochement between the authorities and the Brotherhood, as Sadat sought to use the Islamists to defeat the leftists. However, under Mubarak, Brotherhood members were periodically rounded up and detained, and even put on trial before emergency courts.

Recognising the need to rejuvenate the group and its fortunes, the Muslim Brotherhood announced a political reform plan in March 2004, which included calls for an end to the emergency law, a check on presidential powers, releasing political prisoners and rotation of political power through clean elections (El-Din 2004). The adoption of political reform demands facilitated the Muslim Brotherhood's alliance with some political forces, mainly leftists, in the National Coalition for Reform (NCR), which was part of a wider movement for political reform that emerged under Mubarak, grouped under the Kifaya umbrella (Abdel-Latif 2005). Whilst this particular movement failed to achieve its objectives of introducing political reforms under Mubarak, it contributed to the growing terrain of dissent that led to

the 25 January Revolution and to a strategic alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and leftists.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, and a handful of Salafi parties (notably the Nur Party), won a majority of seats in the November and December 2011 parliamentary elections. The constitution drafting process, which followed the parliamentary elections, rather than representing an opportunity for consensus-building between different political groupings over the future of Egypt, created polarization between Islamists and secular-oriented political leaders. This polarization should be not necessarily be attributed to contestations over the presence of religion in the public sphere. As Nathan Brown and Clark Lombardi (Lombardi and Brown 2012) noted at the time, there was consensus amongst Islamists and non-Islamists over Article 2 ('that the principles of sharia are the principal source of legislation').

Rather, the contestations over the constitution may be characterized as a division over whether majoritarianism or pluralism should become the defining feature of Egypt's future polity. On the one hand, the Islamists, having won the majority of seats in parliamentary elections, believed that they were representative of the majority of Egyptians and that this gave them the legitimacy to dominate the constituent assembly responsible for drafting Egypt's new constitution and to determine Egypt's future polity. On the other side, secular opposition parties and many groups within civil society opposed what they saw as the Islamist monopolization of the constitution drafting process.

The majoritarian stance on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood was particularly shocking given that this group had previously allied with other forces for democratic reform under the

Mubarak regime and raised concerns that the Islamists merely aimed to change the personnel ruling the state rather than change the structures of the state itself (for example, see (Sabry 2012). Several civil society actors opposed the constitution draft for supporting ‘the cornerstones of political tyranny by adopting a system which enshrines massive powers for the presidency, as was the case prior to January 25, 2011.... [and leaving] the door wide open to the creation of a religious state, which poses severe challenges to rights and freedoms’ (Several Egyptian human rights organizations 2012) and for its failure to explicitly protect gender equality (Samir 2013). Artists and writers raised concerns that the new constitution would place limits on freedom of expression (Mosireen 2012; Shaw 2013). Their objections, embedded within a liberal approach to rights and autonomy, are nevertheless simultaneously framed in terms of the failure of the constitution to reflect the aspirations of the revolution. Their positions contrast with the approach of the Islamists (as well as the military and previous Egyptian regimes), which emphasizes the interests of ‘the nation’, whether its morality, its security or its stability, over the rights of individual Egyptian citizens.

Secular political leaders challenged the domination of Islamists in the constituent assembly through the Supreme Court. Along the road of challenges and counter-decrees by the elected President Morsi, secular as well as Coptic members of the committee gradually withdrew in protest against the way in which, they believed, the Islamists were forcing through their will. In the end, on 22 November 2012, President Morsi used his executive powers, inherited from Mubarak, to force the constituent assembly to complete the draft constitution in time for a public referendum on 15 December 2012. It was approved with a two-thirds majority, but the low turn-out undermined the legitimacy of the document.

For many, this debate was not only one over process and rights but also over the identity of Egypt. The Islamist domination of the constitution drafting process raised questions within civil society over the nature of Egyptian identity. Islamic? Pharaonic? Mediterranean? Arab? For the Islamists, the constitution safeguarded the Islamic character of Egypt. For Egypt's more cosmopolitan citizens, Egypt's historical identity is a tapestry of different identities (Osman 2012), as explored by Egyptian artists and musicians Khaled Hafez, Maged Mekhail, Amir Ramses, amongst others (Ahram Online 2013c; Elkamel 2013a; Elkamel 2013b).

What the debate over the constitution demonstrates is that the role of religion in public life per se is not disputed. Rather, divisions between Islamists and non-Islamists were concerned about the nature of the polity (majoritarian or pluralistic) and also about whether Egyptian identity and, linked to this citizenship rights, should be defined primarily by religion or not. For the Islamists, their gains in parliamentary elections justified their monopolization of the constitution drafting process and the constitution's content. For non-Islamists, the constitution drafting process demonstrated an attempt to suppress Egypt's social and political diversity and to replicate the authoritarian structures of the Mubarak regime.

The Position of Minorities within The Nation

The question of the position of Coptic Christian citizens of Egypt has historically been a contentious and sensitive issue. In the latter stages of the Ottoman empire, European powers claimed tutelage over Christian minorities in the Middle East as part of their encroachment into the empire. As colonial powers, the Europeans distinguished Muslims from Christians in a 'divide and rule' strategy. In the struggle against the British occupation, many Egyptian nationalists made a concerted effort to break down religious divisions and unify the people as

Egyptians. Since then, previous regimes, as well as many Egyptian citizens, have argued against the use of the term ‘minority’ to describe the Copts (Abdel-Latif 2000) and, instead, insist that ‘Copts are part of the Egyptian national fabric’. However, this position often operates to gloss over the official and unofficial discrimination that occurred and continues to occur against Copts. Under Mubarak, those who argued that Copts were victims of discrimination were accused of inciting sectarianism and of inviting Western interference in Egypt’s domestic matters (Pratt 2005).

During the uprising, the theme of Copts and Muslims protesting side by side was a constantly recurring one. Street graffiti around Cairo shows the Muslim crescent and the Christian cross intertwined or side by side. However, despite the rhetoric of multi-faith unity, attacks against Coptic churches have continued in the post-Mubarak period (Tadros 2011). Some of these have been sparked by rumours that Muslim women are being kidnapped, held in churches and forced to convert (Ahram Online 2013a). The military council, the Morsi presidency and state security all failed to stop attacks on Copts (Kingsley 2013; Tadros 2011), whilst some media commentators have denied that these attacks have a sectarian motivation (Tadros 2011).

Most worryingly, in October 2011, the military, security forces, as well as state media, were implicated in violence against mainly Coptic protesters outside the state media building in Cairo—called the Maspero Massacre – which resulted in the deaths of at least 25 protesters and left over 200 injured. They had been protesting against the failure of state authorities to investigate the burning of another church. The Maspero events themselves as well as reactions to them illustrate both continuity with, and change from, pre-revolution Egypt. On the one hand, the military denied that it had shot at and run over protesters, and even claimed

that military personnel had come under attack (Ibrahim 2012). On the other hand, there was a huge uproar from activists and different sections of civil society, condemning the violence of the military and state security forces and the incitement by state media, as well as calling for justice for Copts (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and 20 other organizations 2011; Gundy and Tarek 2011). These reactions to the Maspero events, and other instances of violence against Christians, are indicative of the desires of many activists to address the position of Copts not just as a slogan but also as an integral part of the transformation of Egypt from authoritarianism and towards freedom and pluralism.

The Maspero events were also indicative of a new trend amongst Copts themselves. By going out to protest, beginning with the 25 January Revolution and continuing after Mubarak stepped down, many Copts defied the appeal of Pope Shenouda not to protest. In so doing, they were, argues Paul Sedra (2012), rebelling against the ‘modern millet partnership’ that characterized relations between the Church and the Mubarak regime. The ‘modern millet partnership’ placed Copts within a double communal bind in which they were subordinated to the Church which, in turn, was subordinated to the ruler. The 2012 constitutional article making ‘the canon principles of Egyptian Christians and Jews’ the ‘main source of legislation for personal status laws, religious affairs and the selection of their religious leaders’ represented an attempt to perpetuate the ‘modern millet partnership’ in the post-Mubarak era. Sedra (2012: 38) suggests that it is the rise of Coptic lay activism that contributed to the decision by the Church to withdraw from the Constituent Assembly, despite its desire to see its authority over Coptic community matters enshrined.

The wars of position being waged over the question of the position of Copts within the Egyptian nation and polity are not drawn along religious differences (Muslim versus

Christian) or according to secularists versus Islamists. Rather, this war of position may be categorized as pitting those who believe in communal attitudes that subordinate the rights of individuals and minorities to the collective against those who believe in individual freedoms and, linked to this, more pluralistic notions of the nation.

The Relationship between Egypt and the West

National identity construction in the post-independence period in Egypt has occurred against the backdrop of colonial and neo-colonial domination of the Middle East region. Against this backdrop, from the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser to that of Morsi, there has often existed a rejection or suspicion of ‘cultural’ influences that are deemed ‘Western’ or ‘alien’ to ‘Arab–Muslim culture’, as dangerous and threatening. Whilst not dismissing the use of culture and norms by Western governments as a sort of ‘soft power’, nevertheless, fears of the West have been used by different Egyptian governments to stoke opposition to dissent.

Human rights and women’s rights groups in Egypt, from the 1990s onwards, have been and continue to be at the centre of debates about links to the West, particularly through the receipt of funds from Western donors (Pratt 2005; Pratt 2006; Pratt 2007: 148-151). Consequently, rights groups, not only in Egypt but in other Arab countries, have been involved in debates about the Islamic sources of human rights or women’s rights and/or over their ‘authenticity’ and, linked to this, their legitimacy (Dwyer 1991). Under Mubarak, the government used widespread suspicion of the West to justify imposing controls over Egyptian non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs’) fund-raising (Pratt 2004). During the eighteen day uprising, the Mubarak regime unsuccessfully attempted to discredit the protesters in Tahrir Square as ‘foreign agents’.

This tactic of the former regime has also been in play since Mubarak stepped down. From the summer of 2011, SCAF began waging a campaign against NGOs and foreign funding. It accused the 6 April Youth Movement, which had played an important role in mobilizing protesters since its founding in 2008, of being trained in the United States and Serbia to carry out ‘subversive’ activities in Egypt. In December 2011, offices of the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, Konrad Adenauer Foundation and other groups were raided and 43 employees arrested. The foreign nationals were allowed to leave the country whilst the remaining fourteen Egyptian employees (and one US citizen who remained in solidarity) faced charges of illegally receiving foreign funding—a charge that carries a prison sentence. Whilst it is true that these NGOs were technically operating without a licence, the defence argued that they had been operating with the full knowledge of the Egyptian government (Ahram Online 2013b). In June 2013, the NGO workers were found guilty of operating without a licence and receiving foreign funding (Loveluck 2013).

The NGOs were portrayed in much of the Egyptian state media as foreign spies who sought to undermine the gains of Egypt’s revolution and who even threatened Egypt’s national security. Many have argued that the aim of SCAF was to undermine pro-democracy and human rights NGOs in general, who were monitoring SCAF’s human rights abuses (Fahmy 2012). Indeed, the trial of the NGO workers coincided with efforts to introduce a new NGO bill that would further control the activities of civil associations (Carr and Mohsen 2012).

A similar campaign to control foreign funding of Egyptian NGOs has also been part of Morsi’s presidency. An NGO law proposed by the Shura Council in March 2013 prohibited Egyptian NGOs from receiving funds from abroad and subjected foreign NGOs to stringent

monitoring, in the name of preventing foreign NGOs from operating as ‘spies’ in Egypt and ensuring that Egyptian NGOs contribute to national development goals (El-Din 2013a).

The debates triggered by NGOs and foreign funding illustrate long-running divisions not only between civil society and the regime but also within civil society. These debates are more than issues concerning the regulation of funding and NGO activities but are essentially about the nature of Egypt’s future polity. On one side are those who support a ‘fortress Egypt’ and believe that Egyptian sovereignty can only be protected by policing the nation’s cultural borders and subordinating civil society to the aims of the nation. This group views not only foreigners but those Egyptians who adopt ‘foreign’ values or ideas as threatening to those aims. On the other side are those who support a more pluralistic Egypt, often viewing Egypt within a more cosmopolitan frame, but also valuing the independence of civil society and political dissent. The issue of foreign funding, which significantly supports the activities of Egyptian NGOs, is a discursive as well as coercive means of disciplining dissent and buttressing authoritarianism.

Gender and the Nation

As noted above, the issue of women’s role in society and the definition of Egyptian womanhood was an area of public debate in the drafting of the constitution, particularly for women’s rights activists. Representations of women, whether through media, art or state laws and constitutions, are an essential part of defining national identity and national difference, as well as markers between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Yuval-Davis 1997). In contexts of revolution and regime change, the representation of women and the notion of ‘authentic’ womanhood are often used in political discourse to differentiate the new regime from the old. The case of Egypt is no different. Different representations of femininity and contrasting notions of

Egyptian womanhood have been part of defining the revolution, its aims and the nature of the future Egyptian polity.

The 'empowered revolutionary woman', protesting in Tahrir Square, was a regular feature of images of the 25 January uprising. Egyptian women stressed that 'women and men stood side by side in the revolution' calling for the downfall of Mubarak. However, as the post-Mubarak era has unfolded, the legitimacy of the Egyptian female revolutionary has been increasingly contested through the use of sexualized violence against women protesters. The SCAF undertook 'virginity tests' against women revolutionaries, widely condemned by Egyptian and international human rights organizations. The video of a woman being dragged across the street and beaten by security police, having lost her over-shirt in the process, has become an iconic image of SCAF violence. The shock of the violence was intensified by the fact that the woman had been wearing a veil, which was tugged away from her body. In January and February 2013, there was an alarming increase in sexual assaults against women protesters in and around Tahrir Square during demonstrations marking the second anniversary of the revolution. Women came forward to give testimonies publicly describing how large gangs of men surrounded women, ripping away their clothes and grabbing and violating their bodies. The violence and harassment experienced by these women protesters is tragically ironic given the representation of Tahrir Square as a 'sexual harassment free zone' during the eighteen days of the uprising.

Many activists claim that the violence against women is organized, including by the Muslim Brotherhood, to intimidate women from protesting (al-Masriya 2013). Whoever is responsible for this violence, women's rights activists have argued that there is a widespread complicity or denial amongst authorities and political leaders across the spectrum regarding

the phenomenon (Nazra for Feminist Studies 2013). The violent targeting of women operates to terrorize women out of the public sphere as well as to delegitimize women protesters. Islamists in the Shura Council have blamed female protesters ‘who insist on demonstrating with men in unsecure areas’ for the violence they experience (El-Din 2013b). Public violence against women operates to (re-)define the ‘authentic’ Egyptian woman as one who respects rather than challenges the existing gender order. Amongst Islamists as well as members of the military and other conservative trends, women’s modest behaviour is symbolic of the Egyptian nation, whilst those women who transgress these norms ‘deserve’ to be punished. A senior Egyptian general justified the virginity tests as necessary to prevent female protesters from accusing the military of rape and told CNN that the arrested women ‘were not like your daughter or mine. These were girls who had camped out in tents with male protesters’ (Amin 2011). The use of violence against women is even justified in terms of maintaining ‘authentic’ values and resisting ‘foreign’ cultural invasion. The Egyptian government’s opposition to a United Nations declaration against violence against women at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2013 was based on its content contradicting ‘Muslim values’ and the Egyptian family (Elsadda 2013).

Public violence against women also plays an important counter-revolutionary role by terrorizing women out of the public sphere. Women’s participation in the 25 January Revolution has been represented by Islamists and other conservatives as a temporary necessity to rectify the gender order that had been reversed under Mubarak’s regime, as a result of decades of dictatorship and impoverishment. The need to restore a lost gender order is implied by Asmaa Mahfouz in her impassioned plea, which went viral on YouTube at the beginning of 2011. In which she said: ‘If you think yourself a man, come with me on 25

January. Whoever says that women should not go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honour and manhood and come with me on 25 January' (Mahfouz 2011).

In challenging Egypt's men to join her in demonstrations, Mahfouz provided an implicit critique of the state of gender under Mubarak's regime, suggesting that men had become like women, whilst, women like her had become like men. Whether or not Mahfouz's words had a widespread impact, the reclaiming of masculine dignity was a leitmotif amongst the protesters in Tahrir Square.² The restoration of this masculine dignity depended upon a reestablishment of a gender hierarchy, rather than its dismantlement. The forcible exclusion of women from demonstrations through violence functions to mark the end of the 'revolutionary process' (and, with it, demands for social justice and accountability for past regime crimes) and a return to 'normalcy', including normative gender relations.

In response to this violence against women, revolutionaries have promoted their own counter-narratives and images of women. The case of Samira Ibrahim, who launched a court case against the military for being subjected to so-called virginity tests by the SCAF, has been vocally supported by revolutionaries, and her bravery has been celebrated through graffiti images. Another ubiquitous graffiti image was that of *sitt al-banat* ('the dearest of girls'), representing the woman (mentioned above) who was dragged across the street and beaten by the police. Through these representations, women are reinscribing their victimization as resistance against dictatorship, and in the process redefining 'authentic' Egyptian womanhood.

The war of position over women's role in the post-Mubarak era is part of defining Egyptian identity and the future of Egypt's polity. On one side are those who seek to establish

‘traditional’ gender norms and limit Egypt’s revolution to the holding of elections and the introduction of a new government. On the other are those who seek to challenge so-called traditional gender norms and continue the revolution so that it addresses objectives of social justice, including gender justice. The discursive discrediting of female revolutionaries through their association with ‘inauthentic’ values, as well as efforts to subdue them through sexualized violence, are together central to a strategy of suppressing pluralism and cosmopolitanism, as well as undermining individual rights and dignity.

CONCLUSION

The obstacles to deeper democracy in Egypt cannot be reduced to a focus on institutions, sequencing and political elites—without recourse to an implicit essentialization of Egyptian politics and society. In order to understand the reproduction of authoritarianism and resistance to it, one must look at the debates and contestations within civil society over the identity of Egypt and, linked to this, the nature of the future Egyptian polity. These debates over Egypt’s identity have their roots in the colonial experiences of Egypt and the challenges of building an independent and sovereign nation state. The 25 January Revolution constitutes an attempt on the part of many within civil society to reassess Egypt’s past in order to rethink Egypt’s future.

Tracing the contours of some of the debates in the post-Mubarak era, we see competing wars of position being waged between majoritarian versus pluralist visions of politics and society; ‘authentic’ versus cosmopolitan cultures and identities; and communal versus liberal-individual frames of reference. Gender, religion and nation intersect and are fixed in different ways by these competing discourses. Majoritarian and ‘authentic’ notions of Egyptian

identity and culture align with conservative gender norms; the subordination of rights and freedoms of religious minorities and other dissenting groups to the majority (whether defined in national or religious terms or both); and the rejection of ideas and influences deemed ‘foreign’. Citizenship rights depend upon performing ‘the authentic’ Egyptian identity and respecting the majority position. Those who step out of line may expect punishment. This more or less characterizes the position of the Islamists, as well as the military, and may even describe some secular political leaders, particularly following the 30 June uprising, with the National Salvation Front (the previous political opposition) affirming its support for the Egyptian military’s so-called ‘war against terrorism’ (Salem 2013) despite evidence of disproportionate violence used against pro-Morsi protesters (as mentioned above).

Pluralist/cosmopolitan notions of Egyptian identity and more liberal-individual approaches to rights can be found (not necessarily simultaneously or consistently) across a range of actors within civil society, including self-identified revolutionaries, feminists, human rights activists, artists, writers, Coptic Christian rights activists as well as some members of the secular opposition parties. Through their celebration of religious and cultural differences and their attempts to challenge gender hierarchies, they contribute to challenging monolithic representations of Egyptian identity that impose unity to the detriment of the rights of individual citizens and open up spaces for pluralism, diversity and inclusiveness within the new Egypt. Without a consensus within civil society that rejects notions of majoritarianism and authenticity, it will be easy for authorities to erode civil and political rights (either on paper or in practice) on the grounds of ‘national security’ and/or protecting ‘the nation’ from the ‘Other’ (whether internal or external).

The January 25 Revolution did not mark the beginning of a democratic transition but rather the dramatic next phase in the ongoing efforts of many civil society actors to resist authoritarianism. The outcome of the presidential elections and constitutional referendum in 2012 demonstrated that neither the revolutionaries nor the Muslim Brotherhood nor any other political force had yet won over a critical mass to their side and were able to govern Egypt. Events following the June 30 uprising have illustrated that the military continues to play a key role in Egyptian politics and that the remnants of the Mubarak regime, most notably state security, have not been defeated. Those seeking to dismantle authoritarianism have a long struggle ahead. One of the greatest threats to achieving the objectives of the uprising ('bread, freedom and social justice') and to establishing a deep democracy in Egypt would be the failure of civil society to continue its resistance against authoritarianism. For a long time, civil society in the Arab world was a space in which consent for the rule of authoritarian regimes was manufactured. Now, civil society has become the space in which authoritarianism is being contested, resisted and, hopefully, dismantled. The revolution continues.

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¹ For reasons of space, I do not discuss here the debate over workers' protests and rights in the post-Mubarak period. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Sallam, H. 2011. 'Striking back at Egyptian workers'. *Middle East Report*, 41, 20-5; and Marie Duboc in this volume. Support for workers' demands is essential to the achievement of social justice in Egypt and attempts to suppress them.

² See the images in Khalil, K. 2011. *Messages from Tahrir: Signs from Egypt's Revolution*, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press. for examples of the gendered frames of protest in Tahrir Square.